

Date of Hearing: April 21, 2026

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION

Mike Fong, Chair

AB 2087 (Lee) – As Amended April 13, 2026

**SUBJECT:** Trustees of the California State University: members

**SUMMARY:** Increases the size of the Board of Trustees (BOT or Board) of the California State University (CSU) to 27 members, reduce the number of appointive members from 16 to 10 and require those members to be selected from outstanding citizens of California, as specified, require one faculty member to be selected by the Academic Senate of the CSU, require two student members from the CSU to instead be selected through a specified election process, and add to the board four faculty members and four nonfaculty classified staff members from the CSU to be selected through a specified election process. Specifically, **this bill:**

- 1) The board shall be composed of 27 members as follows:
  - a) Five ex officio members as follows:
    - i) The Governor;
    - ii) The Lieutenant Governor;
    - iii) The Superintendent of Public Instruction;
    - iv) The Speaker of the Assembly; and,
    - v) The person named by the trustees to serve as the Chancellor of the California State University.
  - b) One representative of the alumni associations of the state university, selected for a two-year term by the CSU alumni council, who must not be an employee of the CSU during the two-year term;
  - c) One faculty member from the CSU, who shall be tenured at the CSU campus at which the faculty member teaches, selected for a two-year term by the Academic Senate of the CSU;
  - d) Ten appointed members appointed by the Governor and subject to confirmation by two-thirds of the membership of the Senate, who:
    - (1) Must be appointed from outstanding citizens of California who have a strong interest in the further development and improvement of the California State University; and,
    - (2) Should be, to the greatest extent possible, inclusive and representative of the many demographic groups found in California, and should reflect diversity of race and gender, and should include, among others, disabled persons and veterans.

- (3) Should embrace, in furtherance of the mission of the CSU, the basic role and responsibility of a member of the board to bring their own best thinking and personal views to the board's discussion, determining their own position on each issue rather than being bound to represent or advocate for the positions of a particular organization or constituency.
- e) Ten elected members, which include:
  - i) Four faculty members from the CSU selected for four-year terms through an election administered by the CSU where faculty of the CSU vote to select those faculty members;
  - ii) Four nonfaculty classified staff members from the CSU selected for four-year terms through an election administered by the CSU where nonfaculty classified staff of the CSU vote to select those nonfaculty classified staff members; and,
  - iii) Two student members from the CSU selected for two-year terms through an election administered by the CSU where students of the CSU vote to select those student members; and specifies that a student member will have their tuition fee waived for the duration of the their term of office.
- 2) Specifies that, regarding terms of office:
  - a) The four-year terms of office of the faculty members and nonfaculty classified staff members of the board elected, as specified in 1) above, will expire on January 15, and that the BOT will hold a special election to fill a vacancy that occurs during the term of an elected faculty member or nonfaculty classified staff member of the board. Requires that, if at the time a vacancy occurs and the unexpired term is less than two years, the new member elected to fill that vacancy will hold office for the remainder of the unexpired term of the vacated office plus four years; and,
  - b) The two-year terms of office of the student members of the board elected, as specified in 1) above, will expire on January 15, and that the board will hold a special election to fill a vacancy that occurs during the term of an elected student member of the board. Requires that, if at the time a vacancy occurs and the unexpired term is less than one year, the new member elected to fill that vacancy will hold office for the remainder of the unexpired term of the vacated office plus two years.
- 3) Requires the board to develop election procedures for the elections carried, as specified, that that:
  - a) The board shall ensure that ballots are distributed to all faculty, nonfaculty classified staff, and students in advance of each of the respective elections and will ensure the return of completed ballots to the board without cost to the voter;
  - b) The results of an election shall be certified by an independent third party;

- c) The board may require all people who perform election duties to certify, under penalty of perjury, that they properly performed those duties; and,
- 4) Establishes that that no reimbursement is required by this act, as specified.

**EXISTING LAW:**

- 1) Establishes the CSU system, comprised of 23 campuses, and bestows upon the CSU Trustees, through the BOT, the power, duties, and functions with respect to the management, administration, and control of the CSU system (Education Code (EDC) Sections 66606 and 89000 et. seq.).
- 2) Establishes the membership of the BOT to include 25 voting members as follows:
  - a) Five ex-officio members including the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the person named by the trustees to serve as the Chancellor of the California State University;
  - b) A representative of the CSU alumni associations, who is appointed to serve a two-year term by the alumni council and is not employed by the CSU while on the board;
  - c) Sixteen members of the public, who are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by two-thirds of the California State Senate for an eight-year term;
  - d) Two students, who are at least sophomores and attend a campus of the CSU, are appointed by the Governor from a list of two to five names provided by the California State Student Association (CSSA); and,
    - i) One student representative is appointed for a two-year term beginning on July 1 of an even number year and ending on June 30 two years later. The second student representative is appointed to a two-year term beginning on July 1 of an odd number year and ending on June 30 two years later; and,
    - ii) Students appointed will have their tuition fee waived for the duration of their term of office on the BOT.
  - e) One tenured faculty member from the CSU is appointed by the Governor to serve on the board for two years. The Governor selects the faculty member from a list of names provided by the systemwide Academic Senate of the CSU.
    - i) The faculty member is not permitted to participate on any subcommittee of the BOT which is responsible for collective bargaining negotiations; and,
    - ii) The appointed faculty member will begin their two-year term on July 1 and if the Governor has not appointed a successor by the end of the term, the faculty member may remain on the BOT for one additional year or until the Governor appoints a successor; whichever occurs first. (EDC Section 66602)

**FISCAL EFFECT:** Unknown

**COMMENTS:** *Purpose.* According to the author, “we must ensure that CSU students, faculty, and staff are represented on the Board of Trustees. They are the backbone of the nation’s largest 4-year university system and a pillar for California’s education, economic power, and technological innovations. By democratizing the Board of Trustees, AB 2087 ensures that those who contribute to CSU every day have a seat at the leadership table. It creates a pathway for those impacted by the Board’s decisions to be heard, and promotes a more inclusive governance for CSU.”

*California State University and the Board of Trustees.* Originally established in 1875 as a college for teachers in San Francisco, the CSU has since expanded to include 22 campuses who enroll over 470,000 students. The CSU provides nearly half of the bachelor degrees in the state and has an alumni base of over three million students and counting. To oversee the nation’s largest four year public university, the State established the BOT).

The BOT is endowed with the authority to adopt regulations and policies pertaining to the overall operations of the CSU including educational policy decisions, budgeting, and campus planning. The membership of the board is comprised of 25 members each with term limits and voting privileges, who are selected and appointed through various manners.

| <i>Member</i>   | <i>Term Limit</i>  | <i>How the Trustee is chosen to serve:</i>  |
|---|--|---|
| Five ex officio members (Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Speaker of the Assembly, and Chancellor of the CSU) | Term of their elected or appointed office.   | <p>The Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and Superintendent of Public Instruction, are elected in a statewide election and are immediately appointed to the Board.</p> <p>The Speaker of the Assembly is an elected official in the California State Assembly who is selected by their peers to lead the State Assembly.</p> <p>The Chancellor of the CSU is appointed by the BOT after an exhaustive nationwide search and is immediately appointed as a member of the BOT.</p> |
| Two student members who attend a CSU campus and are at least in their sophomore year (or have taken at least 30 units).                           | Each are appointed for two-year terms that are staggered so that one student begins their term on July 1 in an odd numbered year and the other student’s term begins the following year (even numbered year) on July 1. Both students’ terms end on June 30 after two years (one in an odd numbered year and one | Appointed by the Governor from list of at least two to five students provided by CSSA.  |

|                             |  |   |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
|                             | in an even numbered year).   |   |
| 16 members of the public    | One eight-year term  | When their term expires, the Governor will appoint a member of the public to replace the outgoing member of the board and the new appointee is approved by 2/3 of the Senate. |
| One tenured faculty member  | One two-year term. The faculty trustee is permitted to remain on the BOT past the expiration of their term for one year if the Governor has not appointed a replacement. | Appointed by the Governor from a list of faculty provided by the systemwide CSU Academic Senate.  |
| An alumni of the CSU system | One two-year term.   | Appointed by the Alumni Council of CSU and the appointee may not be employed by the CSU during their tenure on the board.   |

*Arguments in support.* According to the CSU Employees Union (CSUEU), a co-sponsor of the bill, noted that “the CSU Board of Trustees play a critical role in overseeing and guiding the operations of the CSU. Recently the Board of Trustees acted to increase compensation of the highest paid executives at the University while overseeing cuts to campuses and employee compensation. AB 2087 will adjust the compensation of the Board of Trustees to ensure that diverse voices, including those who work at the University, serve on the BOT and provide guidance on the operations of the University...creating the elected seats on the CSU will allow these positions to be selected in a manner similar to the way in which members are elected to the California Public Employees Retirement System [CalPERS] Board. This will ensure critical voices are added to the board who can help provide guidance and direction from those who power the University and those students who are being served by the CSU.”

The California Faculty Association (CFA), a co-sponsor of the bill, wrote that, “the CSU BOT currently has 25 members, which includes the Governor, the Lieutenant Governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Speaker of the Assembly, and the Chancellor of the California State University; a representative of the alumni associations of the state university; and 16 members appointed by the Governor. Of these appointees, there is one faculty, two students, and no staff representation on the board. Faculty, non-faculty staff, and student representation on the CSU BOT ensures institutional decisions reflect the perspective of the campus community, in particular those most affected institutional decisions.”

*Arguments in opposition.* According to the CSU Office of the Chancellor, “while the CSU shares the author’s goal of ensuring robust stakeholder engagement, the Board already incorporates meaningful and effective avenues for diverse perspectives to be heard. Faculty, staff and students engage with the Board through formal representation, committee participation, standing reports and written, in-person, and virtual public comment opportunities. The current Board membership

includes one voting faculty trustee nominated by the Academic Senate of the California State University (ASCSU) and appointed by the Governor, and two student trustees nominated by the California State Student Association and appointed by the Governor. The faculty trustee serves on key committees, including Education Policy, Audit, Finance and Institutional Advancement. Student trustees collectively serve on multiple committees, including Education Policy, Audit, Finance, Campus Planning, Buildings and Grounds, Governmental Relations, Institutional Advancement and University Personnel. Through this participation, the perspectives of students and faculty are consistently elevated and meaningfully incorporated into Board deliberations.”

The CSU Office of the Chancellor continues, writing that “AB 2087 proposes a sweeping reconfiguration of the Board by introducing elected faculty, staff and student members selected by specific constituencies. This approach creates an inherent tension with the expectation that trustees exercise independent judgment in the best interests of the entire system, rather than represent particular groups. It risks shifting Board deliberations from systemwide governance to constituency-based advocacy. Additionally, the proposed structure represents a substantial departure from established governance models used by public higher education systems in California and nationwide, which rely on appointed boards to ensure independence, expertise and alignment with statewide priorities. CSU’s current model is consistent with these best practices and helps preserve the Board’s fiduciary role.”

The California State Student Association (CSSA) also wrote in opposition, noting that AB 2087 (Lee) “...replaces the current student trustee selection process with a direct election model, eliminating a proven, student-led framework that has consistently produced effective student representation. The existing process is driven by duly-elected students and informed by established student leadership networks across the CSU, ensuring that candidates are evaluated by peers who understand the needs and priorities of the student body. CSSA conducts an open and accessible statewide search process designed to ensure equity, fairness, and broad participation. The current process also intentionally produces multiple, qualified finalists, rather than a single nominee. While there is often a clear front-runner, it is not advisable to advance only one candidate. In practice, having a slate of candidates has proven critical, as there have been instances where issues identified during background checks or later stages of review required consideration of alternate candidates. This structure provides an important safeguard and ensures continuity in the selection process - something that is not clearly replicated in the proposed election model.”

CSSA also rose concerns regarding the election system, writing that “additionally, moving to a direct election system without careful design raises concerns about whether the process will consistently produce informed, representative, and systemwide-focused leadership. Factors such as uneven campus engagement, varying access to campaign resources, and differences in voter turnout across 22 campuses could result in outcomes that do not fully reflect the diversity and breadth of the CSU student body. The newly proposed process would allow for students with external or internal financial advantages to extend their reach across our 22 campuses, disadvantaging students who aren’t given the same advantages. In a system where the majority of students are Pell Grant recipients and many are first-generation college students, a campaign-based model risks amplifying inequities by favoring those with greater financial or institutional support. CSSA is committed to ensuring that all students - regardless of background - have a fair and equal opportunity to access and be considered for leadership roles of this significance.”

*Scope of the proposed change.* AB 2087 (Lee) proposes a significant restructuring of the BOT, rather than an incremental adjustment to its composition. In addition to expanding the Board from 25 to 27 members, the bill reduces gubernatorial appointees from 16 to 10, removes the Governor from the selection of the faculty, student, and staff trustees entirely, and introduces ten new seats filled by direct election within specific CSU constituencies. Taken together, these changes would mean that appointed members constitute a minority of the non-ex-officio seats, with elected and constituency-selected members forming the plurality.

*The Committee may wish to consider whether the problem the bill seeks to address — which sponsors describe as inadequate representation of faculty, staff, and students in Board deliberations — requires a restructuring of this magnitude, or whether the underlying concerns could be addressed through more targeted adjustments to the existing appointment process.*

*Comparison to other California segments and national models.* If enacted, AB 2087 (Lee) would make the CSU Board structurally distinct from both the University of California Board of Regents and the California Community Colleges Board of Governors, neither of which uses elections to fill voting seats.

*The Committee may wish to consider whether there is a compelling reason to adopt a governance model for CSU that differs so substantially from the other two segments of California public higher education.*

Committee Staff also notes that while several public university systems in other states do use elections to select governing board members — including the University of Michigan, Michigan State University, Wayne State University, the University of Colorado, the Nevada System of Higher Education, and the University of Nebraska — in each case those elections are conducted through votes of the general electorate, either statewide or by district, rather than through elections limited to internal campus constituencies. Notably, at the University of Colorado, constituency-based representatives for students, faculty, and staff serve on the Board in a non-voting advisory capacity alongside the elected regents. The constituency-based voting election model proposed by AB 2087 (Lee) does not appear to have a direct parallel among public university systems in the United States.

*The CalPERS analogy.* The bill's sponsors have indicated that the election framework is modeled after the process used to elect members to the CalPERS Board.

*The Committee may wish to consider whether a retirement board and a university governing board are sufficiently analogous to warrant a shared selection model.*

CalPERS trustees are charged primarily with the oversight of a pension fund on behalf of defined beneficiary classes. By contrast, CSU Trustees exercise authority over academic policy, tuition and fees, executive compensation, capital planning, collective bargaining, and the educational mission of a 22-campus system serving approximately 470,000 students. The question is whether constituency-based elections — which function well for a board whose purpose is to represent defined member classes — map appropriately onto a board whose members are expected to balance competing institutional interests and to exercise independent judgment on behalf of the system as a whole.

*Independence and potential conflicts of interest.* Current law specifies that trustees should bring their "own best thinking and personal views" to Board discussions and should determine their own position on each issue "rather than being bound to represent or advocate for the positions of a particular organization or constituency." The CSU Office of the Chancellor has raised the concern that constituency-based elections could create tension with this expectation by shifting Board deliberations from systemwide governance toward constituency-based advocacy.

*The Committee may wish to consider this tension carefully, particularly given that the Board is regularly called upon to decide matters in which elected trustees would have direct personal or financial interests — including executive and employee compensation, tuition policy, and the outcomes of collective bargaining negotiations.*

*The Committee may also wish to note that existing law currently prohibits the faculty Trustee from participating on any Board subcommittee responsible for collective bargaining negotiations, but the bill as amended removes this prohibition while simultaneously increasing the number of faculty trustees to five and adding four elected staff trustees. It is unclear how conflicts of interest would be managed when as many as nine of the BOT's 27 members may be directly affected by the outcomes of matters before them.*

*Implementation capacity and cost.* AB 2087 (Lee) directs the Board to "develop election procedures" for elections that would involve distributing ballots, at no cost to voters, to an electorate of several hundred thousand faculty, staff, and students across 22 campuses, with results certified by an independent third party.

While CalPERS regulations could serve as an implementation template, *the Committee may wish to consider the administrative capacity and fiscal cost associated with conducting system-wide elections on this scale on a recurring two- and four-year cycle, and whether CSU has the infrastructure to administer elections of this magnitude.*

*Concerns with the Student Trustee selection process.* AB 2087 (Lee) replaces the existing student trustee selection process — in which the California State Student Association solicits applications statewide, vets candidates through an established peer review process, and forwards a slate of qualified finalists to the Governor — with a direct election. As noted by CSSA in opposition, the current process intentionally produces multiple qualified finalists to ensure that alternates are available if issues are identified during background checks or later stages of review, a safeguard that does not appear to be replicated in the proposed election structure.

A direct election model also raises questions about equity of access: with 22 campuses spread across the state, candidates without external financial support or institutional backing could be at a significant disadvantage in mounting a system-wide campaign, which is a particular concern given that a majority of CSU students are Pell Grant recipients and many are first-generation college students.

*The Committee may wish to consider whether the proposed process would narrow the pool of viable student trustee candidates to those with preexisting financial or institutional advantages. The Committee may also wish to consider, given historically low turnout in campus-level elections and widespread unfamiliarity among students with the existence and role of the Board of Trustees, what mechanisms would be necessary to ensure that elections produce genuinely*

*representative outcomes rather than reflecting only the most politically organized subset of the student body.*

*Vetting and qualifications.* Under the existing process, candidates for appointment to the Board undergo extensive background review by the Governor's Office, which verifies eligibility and legal capacity to serve. The bill does not specify how comparable vetting would occur for elected members, nor does it identify who would be responsible for confirming that candidates meet basic eligibility requirements.

*The Committee may wish to consider whether the absence of a formal vetting mechanism is a gap that should be addressed through amendments before the bill advances. The Committee may also wish to note that the bill removes the existing academic standing requirement for student trustees (current law requires sophomore standing and good academic standing), and does not include a replacement eligibility standard beyond enrollment.*

*Technical and transitional issues.* The Committee may wish to note several technical concerns with the bill as currently drafted:

- 1) The term "nonfaculty classified staff" is not defined. CSU employs a mix of management, classified, and represented classified employees, and the absence of a clear definition could lead to disputes over who is eligible to vote and to serve.*
- 2) AB 2087 (Lee) does not include a transition provision addressing how the Board would move from its current composition of 16 appointed trustees (serving staggered eight-year terms) to the new composition of 10 appointed trustees, nor how the initial terms of the 10 newly elected members would be staggered to avoid simultaneous expiration.*
- 3) While the bill sets uniform term expiration dates of January 15, it does not clearly address what happens to currently seated appointees whose terms would extend beyond the effective date of the new structure. The Committee may wish to consider whether amendments to address these transitional and definitional issues are necessary before the bill advances.*

*Prior legislation.* AB 958 (Sharp-Collins, 2025) would have Adds a seventeenth member of the public and a second faculty member to the CSU BOT. AB 958 was moved to the inactive file on the Assembly Floor.

AB 2275 (Fong), Chapter 103, Statutes of 2024, requires members of the CSU BOT to be selected from outstanding lay citizens who have a strong interest in CSU, and to the greatest extent possible, be inclusive and representative of the demographic diversity of California.

AB 2070 (Cervantes, 2024) would have added a second faculty member to the CSU BOT. AB 2070 was moved to the inactive file on the Assembly Floor.

AB 2516 (Santiago, 2024) would have added a bargaining unit representative selected for a 2-year term by the California State University Labor Council to the CSU BOT. AB 2516 was moved to the inactive file on the Assembly Floor.

AB 1625 (Medina) Chapter 103, Statutes of 2022, authorizes a student who was appointed to the CSU BOT, whose term expires on June 30, to remain as a member of the BOT until either

January 1 of the following year or until the Governor has appointed the student's replacement; whichever occurs first.

AB 514 (Medina), Chapter 61, Statutes of 2019, allows all student members of the BOT to vote throughout the duration of their term on the BOT.

AB 1062 (Levine) Chapter 524, Statutes of 2018, originally increased faculty representation and the voting rights of the student members of the BOT. The bill was amended, removing the content and instead expanded existing reporting requirements for the BOT related to key performance data on online courses.

AB 2386 (Williams, 2016), vetoed, would have revised the membership of the BOT by requiring the Governor to appoint a permanent non-faculty CSU employee for a two-year term.

SB 325 (Block) Chapter 175, Statutes of 2013, waived the tuition fee for student members of the BOT for the duration of their term and permitted sophomores to be appointed as student members of the BOT.

SB 1515 (Yee, 2012) would have changed the CSU BOT composition, increasing the number of faculty, students and represented staff. This measure was held in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

AB 2849 (Lowenthal, 2004) would have added one non-faculty member of CSU. This bill was vetoed by Governor Schwarzenegger. The veto read, "I find no compelling reason for increasing the membership of the CSU BOT specifically to appoint a non-faculty union employee. Under current law, the Governor is authorized to appoint 16 at-large members to the Board, one of whom may be a non-faculty employee. Therefore, the bill is unnecessary."

SB 644 (Burton, Chapter 860, Statutes of 2003) designated one of the 13 gubernatorial appointments to the California Community Colleges (CCC) Board of Trustees (BOG) as a classified employee, with the appointment made from a list of at least three persons furnished by the exclusive representatives of classified employees of the CCC.

AB 307 (Pavley, 2001) would have added one non-faculty member to the CSU Trustees. This bill was ultimately amended to a different subject matter.

SB 1604 (O'Connell, 2000) would have added one non-faculty member to the CSU Trustees. This bill was held at the Senate Desk.

AB 213 (Romero), Chapter 251, Statutes of 1999, increased the size of the BOT from 24 members to 25 by establishing an additional student representative to the board.

## **REGISTERED SUPPORT / OPPOSITION:**

### **Support**

California Faculty Association (Co-Sponsor)

California State University Employees Union (CSUEU) (Co-Sponsor)

**Opposition**

California State Student Association  
California State University, Office of the Chancellor

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